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Grasping Micro-Macro-Interactions in Urban Development Politics: A Multidimensional Network Approach to Collective Action

Bettina Lelong*

Abstract: »Mikro-makro-Interaktionen in der Stadtpolitik: Ein multidimensionaler Netzwerkansatz zur Erklärung kollektiven Handelns in der Stadtentwicklung«. Cities are continuously evolving formations. Change occurs mostly incrementally, but sometimes more radical shifts transform the urban fabric. Considering the complexity of urban development processes, this paper asks for the conditions of collective action which enable an urban policy change deviating from established planning and political perceptions and interpretations, routines and actual balances of power. To capture the structuring conditions, the paper employs Emirbayer and Goodwin's theoretical approach (1996), which conceptualizes cultural, social-structural and social-psychological contexts of action. The paper translates their framework into a network-theoretical methodology which provides an analytical template for the exploration of two empirical case studies. The paper outlines a multilevel analysis and discusses the qualitative network reconstruction and a frame analysis. Interpreting the findings of the political implementation processes of two waterfront redevelopments, it can be assumed that strategic networks of interdependent but loosely coupled actors aspired to overcome hegemonic network domains. The analysis reveals two types of networks, which show an exclusive and an inclusive logic of action respectively. Apart from this general distinction, both cases indicate certain supportive conditions which helped to consolidate the new urban development schemes. Regarding the methodology, it can be concluded that the integrated analysis of actor configurations, cultural frames and social-psychological conditions allowed for an encompassing analysis and helped to discern a variety of constraining and enabling conditions on human agency in urban politics.

Keywords: Collective action, social network analysis, network governance approach, comparative case study design, qualitative content analysis, frame analysis, urban politics.

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1. Cities as a Result of Social Interaction¹

Cities are continuously evolving formations. Their physical form is changing due to ongoing dynamics in social, cultural and economic dimensions. For instance, local economies may lose their primary functions and leave behind brownfields for city restructuring, as waterfront redevelopment projects all over the world clearly demonstrate. In this paper, I ask for the “forces” behind such physical restructuring. On the one hand, patterns of cities, i.e. waterfront sites, seem to indicate a harmonization process in the wake of global city restructuring, giving the impression of a certain “replaceability” with regard to the built environment. On the other hand, governance structures behind these physical trends are highly diverse and cannot be captured by “global or European economic imperatives or by national institutional frameworks, but by a combination of structural aspects and local-opportunity structures used and sometimes created by local actors” (Heinelt and Zimmermann 2011, 1176).

Thus, cities – in their physical and social dimensions – are the result of social action and interaction. They are driven by different strategic alliances that try to realize their visions and shape the city according to their specific interests. As Patsy Healey puts it

the ‘places’ of cities and urban areas cannot be understood as integrated unities with a singular driving dynamic, contained within clearly defined spatial boundaries. They are instead complex constructions created by the interaction of actors in multiple networks who invest in material projects and who give meaning to qualities of places (Healey 2007, 2).

Considering these complexities and dimensions of urban development, this paper asks for the *conditions that enable radical transformation* and thus departs from established planning and political perceptions and interpretations, routines and actual balances of power. Are there individual and collective actors who can be identified as initiating and implementing physical changes? How do they overcome potential resistance and constraining contextual conditions? In asking these questions, the paper bridges the gap between two traditions of urban politics research: On the one hand, scholars of urban politics ask questions about political assertiveness in a micro analytical and actor-centred way referring to the *specific practices of actors in a certain time and space*. More often than not, their historiographical descriptions of cases refer to the strategic capacities of charismatic personalities in spatial planning and policy endeavours. On the other hand, a more structuralist tradition focuses on the

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political economy of cities. This approach emphasizes how “economic and political institutions affect the physical forms, cultural norms, and social relations of cities” (Kleniewski 2006, 10). In doing so, the dominance of *political and economic determinants is defining the local actor’s course of action*, neglecting alternative sources of action or non-action.

Both research traditions reveal significant dimensions when it comes to explaining urban development change. Their one-sided orientation, however, disregards the wider picture. In general, I argue that it is necessary to build a bridge between macro and micro perspectives in urban politics research. To conceptualize the constraining and enabling factors towards change in urban development, I employ Emirbayer and Goodwin’s theoretical approach (1996). Referring to the thematic field of revolutions and collective action, they “elaborate a theoretical approach capable of integrating and relating a wide variety of potentially important elements in a systematic fashion” (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 359). The structuring elements (i.e. rules and resources) are disaggregated into cultural, social-structural, and social-psychological “contexts of action”.

This paper focuses on showing how the analytical framework outlined by Mustafa Emirbayer and Jeff Goodwin can help to illuminate the question which conditions are key to understanding an urban development change. They argue that “social action is embedded within, and simultaneously shaped by, a *plurality* of relational contexts or “structural environments” (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 364). They refer to the cultural, social-structural and social-psychological contexts of action which determine “the ways in which actors act” (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 364). My main aim is two-fold:

- 1) I want to show how the theoretical ideas and categories formulated by Emirbayer and Goodwin may help to understand collective action and urban development change.
- 2) I demonstrate how their framework can be translated into a network-analytical methodology which is capable of explaining collective action and change in a relational perspective.

The paper is structured as follows: Following this introduction, I present three contexts of action based on the work of Emirbayer and Goodwin (1996). The third section aims at demonstrating the translation of these contexts of action into a network theoretical framework for analysing urban politics. In the fourth section, I present the empirical cases and the methodological design for their analysis. The fifth section then links the empirical material to the categories presented before in order to illustrate the performance of my methodological design. In the concluding section I discuss some methodological challenges and implications for further research.

2. Three Relational Contexts of Action

With regard to collective action, Emirbayer and Goodwin (1996) delineate a “synthetic theoretical perspective [...] that encompasses not only culture and social structure, but also social psychology and agency” (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 358). They distinguish three *structural contexts of action* which shape and guide social action “at one and the same time [...], which intersect and overlap with one another and yet are mutually autonomous” (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 358). Those structural contexts constrain or enable potential actions but do not determine them. Still, agency remains “the moment of intentionality at the core of all empirical social action” (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 370). The three structural contexts are as follows:

2.1 Social-Structural Context of Action: The Impact of Actor Configurations

The social-structural context of action encompasses the interpersonal or inter-organizational relations that shape action (cf. Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 367). It brings the *actor configuration* into focus. In the case of urban development, the social-structural context refers to collective and individual actors for instance in politics, administration, municipal and private companies, foundations, pressure groups, and civil society. Actors with certain ideas and interests form strategic alliances with different capacities to act. The national political and economic systems regulate the scope of political resources (e.g. functions) or material resources (e.g. land ownership). The analysis of actors’ resources can explain in part the social structure which forms around a special urban development issue (see chapter 4). But these institutional frameworks merely “define corridors of action for planning practice which may however nonetheless display a good deal of variability” (Reimer and Blotevogel 2012, 14). They provide preliminary indicators pertaining to the specific nature of relations between the actors involved in the process. Furthermore, informal governance mechanisms like trust or reciprocity shape the quality of these relations.

2.2 Cultural Context of Action: The Impact of Perception and Interpretation

The cultural context of action encompasses those perceptions and interpretations “that constrain and enable action by structuring actors’ normative commitments and their understandings of the world and of their own possibilities within it” (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 365). Accordingly, this context enfolds the actors’ perception and construction of reality which frame their behaviour (cf. Berger and Luckmann 1969). If applied to the field of urban development, these factors include the *shared mental models of actors involved*

in shaping the built environment of cities as well as the basic values and norms guiding their actions. The cultural context of action refers to the formal and informal institutional dimensions that guide planning and politics. Apart from codified rules (e.g. planning law), everyday practices are guided by implicit rules and reality constructions. Those frames (e.g. Goffmann 1974; Kahneman and Tversky 1984) can circulate globally (e.g. the urban competition paradigm) or consolidate in specific local or regional planning cultures (cf. Reimer 2012). It is relevant to keep in mind, however, that such a cultural explanation of action should not result in determinism, because “actors almost always have access to multiple cultural structures [...], as well as some agentic capacity to choose elements from among these that resonate with their own experiences or concerns” (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 366).

2.3 Social-Psychological Context of Action: The Impact of Individual Orientations

The third context comprises the enabling and constraining conditions emerging from “psychical structures” which channel “flows and investments [...] of emotional energy” (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 368). These interpersonal structures encompass the *emotional features of collective action*. Here, I depart from Emirbayer and Goodwin’s concept which defines the social-psychological context as a solely transpersonal category. In this paper, the social-psychological context also includes *orientations* of individuals who are likely to be responsible for the formation of ties, the decoupling of actors or the choice of certain strategies and tactics (cf. Obstfeld 2005; Leifeld and Haunss 2012, 383). My network theoretical framework will restore the relational character by combining the individualistic interpretation of this context of action with specific network positions (see chapter 3).

The notion of orientation indicates “a construct of medium specificity between a highly specific attitude (e.g. toward a task) and a more general personality trait” (Obstfeld 2005, 104; cf. Frese and Fay 2001, 153). The (strategic) orientation describes the actors’ preference as to how to encounter problems in social settings (cf. Higgins 1998; Levine et al. 2000; Obstfeld 2005, 104). For instance, actors with a promotion focus prefer to select riskier strategies to solve a problem than actors with a prevention focus (cf. Levine et al. 2000, 88; Higgins 1998).

2.4 Structure and Human Agency

As mentioned above, the cultural as well as social-structural and social-psychological contexts do not determine agency completely (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 370). Still, actors can choose tactics to circumvent certain structuring constraints. From this perspective, agency differs from action “as largely habitual, repetitive, and taken-for-granted” but stresses the *creativity of human actors to invent future problem-solving capacities beyond the scope of merely*

repeating previous actions (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 371). “Agency is precisely that analytical element that revivifies, modifies, and sometimes challenges transpersonal (cultural, social-structural and/or social-psychological) networks in the course of empirical social action” (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 371). To sum up, the three contexts for action derived from Emirbayer and Goodwin can be seen as the totality of institutional patterns which guide social action of individual and collective actors. The purpose of this paper is to apply this integrated perspective to the analysis of collective action and change in urban development processes. In the following chapter, I will show how the analytical framework of cultural-structural, social-structural and social-psychological contexts can be translated into a multidimensional network theoretical approach which aspires to understand and explain the conditions of collective action.

3. Using a Network Theoretical Approach to Analyse Urban Politics

3.1 Why Adopt a Network Perspective?

The utilization of a network theoretical approach for the analysis of urban politics seems fruitful from a thematic, an analytical and a theoretical point of view:

- 1) The relational focus seems *thematically appropriate*. The complexity of urban development processes makes it unlikely that a single actor is capable of implementing change autonomously. This assumption falls into line with studies in innovation research which indicate that “new ideas are increasingly products of connected individuals rather than solitary geniuses” (Vedres and Scotti 2012, 8).
- 2) The *analytical focus* of network analysis goes beyond a mere summing up of actors and connections. The perspective of network analysis reveals its special capability to “study [...] how resources, goods, and even positions flow through particular webs of social transactions” (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 367) and how these resources and governance mechanisms, like trust, reputation and reciprocity, shape the actors’ options for action. In doing so, network analysis is able to investigate options or constraints in the direct environment of a particular actor as well as the conditions resulting from structural conditions elsewhere (cf. Vedres and Scotti 2012, 5). Additionally, the differentiated set of tools of the network approach makes it easier to delineate and analyze the social world structurally and formally (cf. Kappelhoff 2000, 34; Jansen 2006, 175; Grabher 2006, 107; Kenis and Raab 2008, 144).
- 3) The network approach “breaks away from tired debates about the primacy of structure or agency in determining social action” (Grabher 2006, 11; cf. Krippner 2001, 769). Moreover, its degree of abstraction allows a connection between several theoretical strands and a broad application to a range of

empirical fields (cf. Vedres and Scotti 2012, 5). Network theoretical concepts share the same basis, concepts, and offer a “fresh, simple set of heuristics” (Vedres and Scotti 2012, 5). Therefore, concepts which were developed in different scientific disciplines can be transferred into other contexts without falling into theoretical eclecticism (cf. Fielding and Fielding 1986, 33; Flick 2004, 179).

The broad application of the term “*network*” in several sciences calls for a distinct definition of the network the research is referring to. Following Kappelhoff (2000, 34), I used the term in a broader sense as a *system of social interactions* rather than narrowing it down to a specific type of governance structure. In my work, I refer to Mitchell’s (1969, 2) basic notion of “a specific set of linkages among a defined set of actors, with the additional property that the characteristics of these linkages as a whole may be used to interpret the social behavior of the actors involved”. I will specify this fairly general definition later on (see chapter 4).

3.2 Grasping Contexts of Action

My analytical framework refers to various network theoretical approaches. It draws on approaches of the New Economic Sociology (e.g. Smith-Doerr and Powell 2003) as well as the analysis of policy networks in political science literature (e.g. Knoke 1990; Kenis and Schneider 1991; Mayntz 1993). The framework bases on concepts of the *social network analysis* and the *network-governance approach* (e.g. Granovetter 1973; Powell 1990). It also integrates recent constructionist positions (e.g. Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; Mische and White 1998) which aspire to include the impact of perception and interpretation (e.g. Knoke 2004; Janning et al. 2009). These network theoretical approaches translate the cultural-structural, social-structural and social-psychological contexts of action into a multidimensional analysis:

- 1) I get an understanding of the *social-structural context of action* by using the *social network analysis* and the *network governance* approaches. On this level, I concentrate on the structural features of the overall network and its sub-networks. Structural notions like size, density and centrality (e.g. Burt 1992; Wassermann and Faust 1994; Scott 2000) describe relational characteristics which affect the actors’ possibilities of action. For instance, density delineates the degree of connectedness in a network. In a network with high density the majority of actors are connected to each other which can positively influence their exchange of information or resources. To reconstruct the networks I had to define boundaries and the constitutive relations (see chapter 4 in greater detail). To define these relations, I referred back to the exchange of resources as well as to coordinating governance mechanisms like trust, reciprocity and reputation (*network governance approach*, e.g. Granovetter 1973; Powell 1990).

- 2) I get an understanding of the *cultural context of action* by referring to the concept of *network domains* (cf. White 1995) as intersubjective cultural constructions. Network domains consider the social-structural and cultural dimension simultaneously (Mische and White 1998). These are “particular fields of interactions characterized by bundles of relations and associated sets of stories, entangled with each other” (Mützel 2009, 875). In my cases, the actors’ perception and interpretation of the local spatial development possibilities were the focus of my analysis. I narrowed down the “unit of cultural analysis” (DiMaggio 1997, 265) to the perception of the specific policy problem. To identify the various network domains I applied a *frame analysis* (e.g. Goffman 1974; Kahneman and Tversky 1984, 2000; Snow et al. 1986; Rein and Schön 1993).
- 3) I get an understanding of the *social-psychological context of action* by applying *structuralist-constructivist approaches* to social network analysis which emphasize the strategic orientations of actors on specific network positions (e.g. Burt 1992; Obstfeld 2005; Padgett and Ansell 1995). In doing so, I combine the enabling and constraining conditions emerging from social-psychological features with the options resulting from social-structural conditions. Several concepts draw on the *tertius* position which was developed by Simmel (Simmel 1992). The position of “the third” denotes an actor A who is connected to two others B and C which are not connected themselves. Actor A gains room to manoeuvre by the unconnectedness of B and C. The agent can choose between different strategies. On the one hand, he can play off B against C (*tertius gaudens*, Simmel 1992) and try to gain influence by offering arbitrage afterwards (cf. Grabher 2006, 13). On the other hand, he can use his structural advantage (e.g. access to several knowledge bases and sub-networks) in support of A and B (*tertius iungens*, Obstfeld 2005).

3.3 Grasping Network Dynamics

Aside from studying the contexts of action, I assessed the investigation of *network dynamics* as crucial for the explanation of change. In an earlier work, Oliver Ibert and I developed a conceptual proposal to capture these dynamics (cf. Ibert and Lelong 2010). We assumed that change occurs in multiple phases involving different actors and network configurations. We developed the model inductively and deductively – firstly, by comparing four case studies, which indicated the emergence of new urban development strategies, and secondly, by referring to different schools of network theory (cf. Ibert and Lelong 2010)².

² Case studies: HafenCity (Hamburg), Kop van Zuid (Rotterdam), IBA Emscher Park (Ruhr Area), EXPO 2000 Hannover (Hanover). Network Theoretical Schools: Social Network Analysis, Network Governance Approach, Actor-Network Theory.

Regarding the main emphasis of this paper, I will concentrate on methodological issues and outline the model rather briefly (Ibert and Lelong 2010):

- 1) In the *ideation phase*, actors perceive a problem and formulate the weaknesses of the previous development trajectory. They form small and dense networks which develop problem-solving ideas, without however having enough political power to push through the new schemes by themselves.
- 2) In the *mobilization phase* the network founders look for support by forming alliances, i.e. by gradually and selectively developing the network. To overcome opposition, actors who are affected by the project idea but considered to be too critical or difficult to control are decoupled.
- 3) In the *consolidation phase*, the new project gains enough momentum for its subsequent implementation. The alliance must be large enough and there must be an adequate amount of resources available to achieve its implementation. Otherwise, the actors may use surprise tactics to “paralyze” others seen as being opposed to the project. The end of the third phase is marked by the transition to the implementation of the urban development policy change.

4. Data Collection and Network Reconstruction

The following chapter focuses on the application of the multidimensional analysis on urban politics phenomena. To begin with, I introduce two cases of change in urban development. The “successful” implementations of two large-scale waterfront-redevelopment projects form the basis for my study of strategic collective action. After presenting a brief overview of the research design, I present the cases and subsequently explicate the process of network reconstruction at length.

4.1 Research Design

Regarding the complexity of the object of investigation as well as the lack of network analytical studies on an urban or regional level with a similar thematic focus on collective action, I chose a qualitative approach. The qualitative method enabled me to grasp the actors’ subjective perceptions and interpretations which were relevant for their understanding of possible options for future action (e.g. Flick et al. 2004, 5). The actors’ expert knowledge involved in the processes in Hamburg and Rotterdam formed the basis for my network reconstruction.

In general, qualitative approaches provide the openness necessary to collect and interpret the findings required by the explorative character of the research question (cf. Baumgarten and Lahusen 2006, 183). By use of *methodically controlled understanding of the other* (“methodisch kontrollierten Fremdverstehen”, Schütze et al. 1973; trans. cf. Hollstein 2011, 405), I reconstructed the historical processes, the network structures and the conditions of collective

action. Semi-structured qualitative expert interviews were indispensable for the data collection and analysis.

To assess the influence of the cultural context, I applied a *frame analysis*. I chose a *comparative-historical case study design* to enable a certain generalization and triangulation of results. On the one hand, the comparative-historical design comprised the far-reaching description and reconstruction of the respective cases (cf. Flick 2004, 147), which is also the reason why only two cases were investigated. The cases were analyzed separately and subsequently compared. In doing so, I was able to both draw a comparison and identify the processes and causalities of the single cases (cf. *within-case method*, Lange 2013, 4). On the other hand, I did not reconstruct the processes in a profound “totality and complexity” (Flick 2004, 147) as appropriate for a single case study. Altogether, I put more emphasis on the identification of conditions of collective action than on the detailed description of the individual cases or the all-embracing historiographical processes (cf. Siefken 2007, 118). Concerning the evaluation of the single cases, they served as a corrective for each other (cf. Siefken 2007, 118). In summary, it can be said that the study occasionally risked “brushing over nuances and idiosyncrasies of the empirical cases for the sake of the consistency and usefulness” of the conceptual framework (Grabher 2004, 1495).

The *cases* were *selected* due to their contextual similarity (cf. Merkens 2004) and according to the urban waterfront redevelopment topic (cf. Hoyle 1989; Hoyle and Pinder 1992; Schubert 2001). Both cases involved port cities with a major international seaport that represented a vital part of the urban economy. The modern harbour facilities had been relocated away from the immediate vicinity of the city centre leaving behind outdated or derelict inner city docklands. The seaports were run by the local authorities and the land in question was for the most part publicly owned, though port facilities and buildings were in the hands of private and municipal companies.

4.2 The Cases HafenCity Hamburg and Kop van Zuid Rotterdam

In Hamburg (Germany) and Rotterdam (The Netherlands), a group of local actors succeeded in implementing large-scale waterfront redevelopments: HafenCity in Hamburg and Kop van Zuid in Rotterdam. In both cases, the conversion of docklands close to the city centres had been discussed for some time, but hegemonial network domains were blocking progress towards a change of land-use. The political implementation required an urban development policy change in each city regarding the future development of the docklands.

In *Hamburg* (period approx. 1992-1997), three competing network domains interpreted the correct use and future development of the inner city docklands differently. Architects and planners both in administration and the private sector demanded a conversion of the out-dated docklands and preferred an “urban development by megaprojects”. On the contrary, the network domain of “har-

bour development by harbour expansion” insisted that the port boundaries should not be changed. The actors feared that the conversion would challenge the need to expand the port facilities on the outskirts of the city. Wide societal resistance to the expansion of the port was expressed by the network domain “post-industrial urban development”. The political resources of the harbour-related network domain and the post-industrial network domain enforced a blockade of further development towards a conversion or expansion. In 1997, this blockade was suddenly raised. The urban development policy change had been strategically expedited by a group of actors who had prepared the required resources and mobilization of relevant actors in an exclusive network, predominantly based on secrecy (see chapter 5). Consequently, Hamburg’s Senate and Legislative Assembly decided to turn the port areas close to the city centre into a mixed-use urban quarter. The financing and policy implementation of a new container terminal outside the city was inextricably connected to this issue.

In *Rotterdam* (period approx. 1985-1989), the prevalent network domain of “urban development by urban renewal” favoured building small-scale social housing in the out-dated port areas on the south bank of the river. Harbour functions had left the area and the planning process had already started according to a far-reaching participation principle. The residents of neighbouring quarters who would lose their dilapidated homes due to urban renewal measures were part of the planning groups and possessed high political resources in this context. In the early 1980s, young planners in Rotterdam started to criticize the small-scale housing paradigm which dominated urban design in the Netherlands. Concurrently, some urban politicians started to question the promotion of mainly disadvantaged groups and social housing in Rotterdam. They stated a need for urban design which was oriented towards the concerns of the service industry and the members of the middle class (network domain “urban development by megaprojects”). A policy change became perceptible in the mid-1980s, when the original plans were replaced by an upscale quarter with centre functions. In 1989, the city council of Rotterdam passed the decision to develop the “Kop van Zuid” area as a mixed-use quarter with large-scale urban structures, including high-rise buildings. The urban development policy change had been strategically encouraged by a group of actors who formed an inclusive network, which was constantly forced to overcome opposition. The actors made use of a range of mechanisms and tactics to achieve a mobilization in support of their scheme as strongly as possible (see chapter 5).

4.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Social network analysis is generally associated with quantitative methods. But from the early stages on, network researchers used qualitative methods and applied “less structured approaches to data collection, and interpretive methods in describing and analyzing social networks” (Hollstein 2011, 404). Conduct-

ing qualitative research, British social anthropologists like Barnes (1954), Mitchell (1969) and Bott (1957) developed groundbreaking concepts (cf. Hollstein 2011, 404). In line with this tradition, I observed the cases in an explorative manner (inductive), but at the same time was guided by network theoretical concepts (deductive). Therefore, the general research process encompassed inductive as well as deductive phases. These phases alternated (cf. Gerhards 2008, 352; cf. *recursive cycling*, Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007), in order to successively clarify and specify the object of research (cf. Hollstein 2006, 19). The iterative process aimed at developing a coherent conceptional framework, which was tested empirically: Firstly, I did an exploratory study in both cases. I then studied the network theoretical literature in order to select promising concepts which could explain the empirical phenomena I had detected. Secondly, I conceived a preliminary research conception, including a category system for the qualitative content analysis. This preliminary outline gave shape to the interview guidelines and the initial evaluation of the empiric material (cf. Baumgarten and Lahusen 2006, 187). Taking new empirical findings into consideration, I gradually adjusted the analytical framework (e.g. by adding or removing network theoretical concepts). I pursued a preliminary analysis parallel to the collection of further data, which influenced the subsequent interviews. I thus reached a strong interconnection between data collection, editing and evaluation (cf. Baumgarten and Lahusen 2006, 183). In the following, I would like to discuss data collection and analysis in detail.

1) *Data Collection using Qualitative Interviews and Documents*: The data collection was guided by the gathering of relevant statements to reconstruct and interpret the respective historical processes, network structures, governance mechanisms and frames. The empirical studies in Hamburg and Rotterdam were based on a total of 42 qualitative interviews³ that were conducted in 2007 (explorative study) and between summer 2010 and summer 2011 (main study). The semi-structured interviews lasted from 30 minutes to three hours (a mean of 90 minutes). Interviewees were actors in politics, administration, municipal companies, foundations, the private sector and pressure groups.⁴ The discussion topics comprised the most relevant or critical events in the process, the nomination of relevant actors, an assessment of the quality of relations and cooperation between actors, special dyads, pos-

³ 16 interviews in Hamburg and 26 interviews in Rotterdam. Resulting from the exclusive process in Hamburg, it was possible to grasp the network structure by conducting a smaller quantity of interviews.

⁴ Interview partners were the respective mayors, several senators/deputy mayors and heads of administrative departments (e.g. urban development, harbour development, economic promotion, local authority real estate office), administrative officials of different departments, the CEO of a municipal company (Hamburg) and a housing association (Rotterdam), heads of private planning offices, advisors of a citizens group (Rotterdam), the CEO and employees of a municipal foundation (Rotterdam).

sible conflicts and strategies, an estimation of process-supporting factors, urban development discourses and other contextual conditions. The network theoretical categories in the guideline helped me structure the interviews to a certain extent – nevertheless, the interviewees retained a certain freedom in developing their themes during the conversation. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and encoded by means of MAXQDA software. Additionally, various written documents were taken into consideration, e.g. council minutes, newspaper articles, company press releases and publications of the Cities of Hamburg and Rotterdam.

- 2) *Data Analysis using Qualitative Content Analysis*: The evaluation of the interviews followed the qualitative content analysis by Gläser and Laudel (2009):⁵ “The goal of content analysis is the systematic examination of communicative material” (Mayring 2004, 266). A *category system* served as a grid which helped to single out the relevant statements. Starting from the theoretical concepts mentioned in chapter 3, I developed the *category system*. The different levels of analysis as well as different process phases served as structuring elements. The system was not fixed, but continuously and inductively adjusted during the evaluation process (cf. Kuckartz 2010, 201). I introduced new categories, refined them by creating subcategories or condensed categories to more general statements. I approximated the historical processes by grouping or regrouping events to each phase. The coding (selection and attribution) of text passages implied a relevant step of interpretation which was influenced by my individual perception and comprehension (cf. Gläser and Laudel 2009, 200). Subsequently, I edited the text passages which belonged to the same category (*text-retrieval*, i.e. sampling and interpretation of text segments related to the same category, analysis of subjects). I summarized, removed repetitions and reviewed contradictions (cf. Gläser and Laudel 2009, 202). If necessary, I adjusted the theoretical framework by shifting priorities or removing concepts completely. Finally, the edited data helped me to reconstruct and interpret the historical processes, network structures, governance mechanisms and frames.
- 3) *Data Analysis using Frame Analysis*: To identify the network domains, the research followed discourse analytical approaches which use the notion of frames to capture the impact of perception and interpretation (e.g. Goffman 1974; Kahneman and Tversky 1984; Snow et al. 1986, 464; Rein and Schön 1993, 146). Frames are schemata of interpretation (Goffman 1974), which help actors to perceive, identify and label occurrences (cf. Benford and Snow 2000, 614). They construct meaning and guide action. By accomplishing a systematic content analysis following the method of Gerhards and Lindgens (1995), I developed the frames and network domains inductively.

⁵ The qualitative content analysis by Gläser and Laudel follows Mayring (2004) but deals differently with the categories and the category system (cf. Gläser and Laudel 2009, 199).

Text passages were coded, which contained rationales about the future land-use options for the area and its relevance for the development of the city. These new – inductively created – categories were inserted into the aforementioned category system. After editing the material (see above), I condensed the statements to patterns and separated them according to their degree of abstraction (domains, frames, directives for action). By reducing, selecting and generalizing, I identified two (Rotterdam), respectively three (Hamburg), contrasting domains which contained several frames and problem-solving possibilities.

4. Network Reconstruction

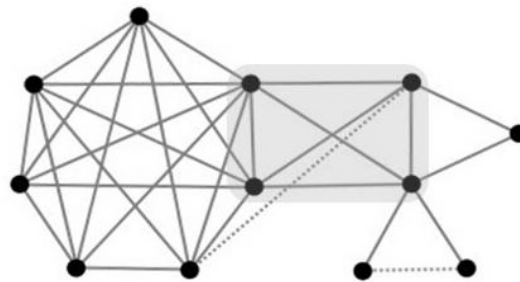
Previously, I described my qualitative approach to data collection and analysis (qualitative expert interviews, content analysis). In the following passages I will present my qualitative network reconstruction and its standardizing visualization⁶. To investigate the structural features, I visualized the networks in the respective stages of the process in order to scrutinize the findings and correct those if necessary (see figure 1). The visualization helped me to detect patterns which otherwise would have gone unnoticed (cf. Wassermann and Faust 1994, 94; Brandes et al. 2006, 16).

The reconstruction of a specific network calls for a definition of its properties. Here, network analysis reveals its potential by requiring an elaborated set of definition criteria for the type of relations and boundary specification. Different perceptions of networks in general can result in various forms of empirical phenomena and blur the discussion, if not specified explicitly. Therefore, it is important to specify the notion of the network the analysis is based on. This paper draws on a definition which is constituted by four criteria:

- 1) The set of relations between
- 2) a specific set of actors (cf. Mitchell 1969),
- 3) the relatively enduring relations for a certain period of time (cf. Grabher 1993), and the
- 4) interdependence and loose coupling of actors (Mayntz 1993, 43-4).

⁶ I standardized the qualitative data by reducing the possible range of relations to present, absent or mere punctually active (dotted lines). In order to keep the readability of the network development over time (several phases) I kept the visualization rather basic.

Figure 1: Network visualization of the mobilization phase, case study Hamburg



The grey mark shows a network core bridging unconnected parts of the network (see chapter 5.2). The visualization was carried out using *visone* (Source: own research).

Apart from these general criteria, I had to define the set of nodes and the types of relations, because “different types of relations identify different networks, even when imposed on the identical set of elements” (Knoke and Kuklinski 1982, 12; cf. Laumann et al. 1983, 18).

- 1) *Sampling and Network Boundaries*: Specifying system boundaries constitutes a central methodological issue in network analysis since social processes or systems seldom consist of a “clear and finite number of participants” (Häußling 2009, 7 [trans. by author]; cf. Laumann et al. 1983). In my cases, multiple actors were concerned with the future land-use and development of the docklands: e.g. various state actors on different political levels, private and publicly owned firms located in the area, neighbouring residents and planners as experts for urban design and harbour development (public or private sector). I used the notion of “mutual relevance” as the main boundary specification criterion. Those actors that regarded “themselves as relevant and consider[ed] each other when calculating actions” were members of the network (Janning et al. 2009, 66 [trans. by author]). The preliminary selection was guided by the German and Dutch planning systems, the analysis of written documents, and the explorative study. The interviewees extended or shortened the list by snowball sampling (e.g. Merkens 2004, 168): They recommended other participants of the process whom they deemed relevant. These participants then integrated further actors or brought the sampling to a close by stating that the list was complete. I could not interview all actors that were judged to be relevant on account of unreceived responses or refusals to participate. However, the interviewees conformed with their statements that the key network actors had been acquired.
- 2) *The Set of Relations*: The same set of actors can be the basis of multiple networks (cf. Knoke and Kuklinski 1982, 12; Jansen 2006, 58). Therefore, I

had to define the specific types of relations and the characteristics which seemed relevant to the research question. In the presented cases, I defined the relations by the following criteria: (1) knowledge about key aspects of the issue (the new development approach); (2) a direct working relationship which (3) remains relatively stable for a certain period of time, and (4) a certain interdependence regarding key aspects of the issue (a symmetrical dependency was not required). Knowing the key aspects of the issue was relevant in order to capture those relations which contained information and knowledge about the “whole picture” of the new urban development approach. For example, in the early stages of the process in Rotterdam quite a number of people became aware that a change in strategy for Kop van Zuid had occurred, without being acquainted, though, with the “details” of the new scheme, such as an additional bridge over the Maas or city centre functions on the site. Indeed, those “details” were far-reaching and most critical elements of the new approach. The stability also reduced the amount of possible relations: relations which turned out to be occasional were neglected. I scrutinized all possible dyads of the preliminary set of actors according to the above-mentioned criteria. My evaluation necessitated a simplification in order to extract structural conditions.

- 3) *Interdependence and Resources*: I analysed the actors’ interdependence by investigating the resources they brought into the process (cf. Kappelhoff 2000, 41). The analysis of the exchange of resources is a common method in policy network analysis (cf. Rhodes 1990; Börzel 1998; Schneider 2009, 15). The lack of relevant resources compels actors in urban development to mobilize other individual or collective actors who are in possession of those resources to be able to continue the process. Resources, then, stimulate the formation of ties and act as a condition for network development. Additionally, they influence governance mechanisms like power or prestige: The amount of actors who depend on an actor A according to a certain resource affects his prestige if he himself is largely independent of the resources of the others (vgl. Schneider and Janning 2006, 130). For example, a service company which is flexible in its choice of location and which, at the same time, is able to generate a large amount of jobs gets high prestige from cities with declining economies. In this paper, I denote resources as options which open up opportunities for action without determining the actual application or certain consequences (cf. Bathelt and Glückler 2005, 1547). In this context, institutional *political resources* result from formal positions and functions. These are the options referring to hierarchical mechanisms or to the anticipation and perception of influence and legitimacy owing to a formal position such as the mayor or his deputies. Due to their political resources, heads of departments in urban administration have more options for action than their employees further down the hierarchical structure. *Material resources* encompass “classical” resources such as raw materials, machinery,

physical infrastructure or financial resources. In the case of Hamburg they are especially relevant as options resulting from long-term property leases of private harbour firms in the docklands. On the one hand, those material resources constrained the network actors' options for action. On the other hand, the participation of the CEO of the public logistics company enabled the network to follow its exclusive strategy due to the leeway provided by the company's financial resources, widespread property leases in different parts of the harbour and political resources. In Rotterdam, such a "well-equipped" actor was missing. *Knowledge resources* include insider information, procedural know-how or expert knowledge; they frequently stimulate tie formations in policy networks (cf. Leifeld and Schneider 2010, 2). In urban development, the administration is a relevant source of knowledge resources next to private sector experts. For instance, in Hamburg actors from the administration provided crucial know-how about the harbour-related firms in the area as well as fiscal and juridical features. In Rotterdam, a private sector urban planner was asked to offer his knowledge about US-waterfront projects and avant-garde presentation techniques. Later on, the Rotterdam actors invited experts from Baltimore to get first-hand information about harbour revitalization.

- 4) *Loose Coupling*: The network criterion of loose coupling (Mayntz 1993, 43-4) delineates the type of relationship that lies between the tight coupling of actors in a hierarchical chain and the complete autonomy of actors in a market form of governance. The present networks were constituted by public, private and intermediate actors; especially the actors in the administrative sector were subject to hierarchical instructions. However, formal mechanisms do not always operate in the institutionally provided manner: In practice, informal mechanisms can neutralize or substitute formal structures (cf. Roethlisberger et al. 1939; Dalton 1959). Additionally, the networks in the case studies indicated strong strategic properties (strategic network, e.g. Sydow 1992). They forged a special form of organization with an extraordinary character (cf. Weber 1972, 140; Ibert 2003, 77). Membership in these networks comprised an above-average motivation and commitment (cf. Blutner et al. 1999, 211), which could not be instructed hierarchically (cf. Mayntz 1993, 43). Instead, the empirical statements indicated a far-reaching self-monitoring system (relatively symmetrical relations despite formal hierarchies, working at eye level). With this in mind I conceived these relations as relatively loosely coupled. For instance, the relation between the First Mayor of Hamburg and the CEO of the municipal logistics company: The former had far more political resources than the latter, but with regard to the issue it did not matter. Similarly, in Rotterdam, most interviewees stressed the cooperation between the mayor and his deputies (the local government) on the one hand and the heads of administration on the other as especially fruitful. They convened frequently to develop, discuss and criticize ideas in

a constructive manner. The heads of administration were given far-reaching freedom to pursue novel ideas autonomously. In both case studies, these relatively symmetrical relations continued downwards the public administration hierarchy and seemed to be crucial for the process.

5. Building Strategic Networks of Change

My retrospective network reconstruction and frame analysis revealed causalities regarding the enabling conditions for an urban development change. Due to the methodological direction of the paper, this chapter concentrates on the comparison between the two cases and the general findings resulting from this. I illustrate the findings by presenting details of the single cases neglecting, however, the depiction of the whole historical processes. By comparing the case studies, the network reconstruction revealed two types of networks, which showed different logics of action: Hamburg can be seen as an example of an exclusive network, predominantly based on secrecy. Rotterdam, on the other hand, was an inclusive network, constantly forced to overcome opposition. Altogether, I observed concurrent conditions, which seemed to have been the cause for change and refer to the preluding contexts of action (see chapter 2, cf. Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996):

- 1) a selective network development strategy predominantly coordinated by trust and reciprocity, but also by tactical mechanisms,
- 2) the elaboration of a new reality construction, and
- 3) specific preferences of actors at strategic network positions.

Through my network reconstruction I was able to identify a delimited set of several individual and collective actors and their mutual relations which were responsible for the successful political implementation processes. Those interdependent but loosely coupled actors pursued their schemes over a number of years (approx. three and seven years respectively). The problem of boundary specification ensuing from the two types of networks I identified manifested itself differently in Hamburg and Rotterdam. The exclusivity of the Hamburg network simplified the delimitation, whereas the Rotterdam network turned out to be much more diffuse, and pragmatic reductions had to be made in the course of the research process (e.g. pooling of actors into types or bundling of events).

5.1 Strategies for Urban Political Implementation

The perception and interpretation of the context influenced the actors' decision as to what measures and tactics they considered suitable to bring about the policy change and to implement their project idea. Such considerations included, for instance, local factors such as ownership structures, the location of the area and anticipated political opposition, but also regional and national institu-

tional conditions. The comparison of the case studies revealed how the two sets of actors assessed their opportunities to implement their political schemes. After estimating their available resources, they devised their strategies, which were adjusted if necessary (*strategic context analysis*, Jessop 2005, 48; Doak and Karadimitriou 2007, 214).

In both cases, the urban development scheme in question was blocked by hegemonic network domains. According to this, the political implementation required a broader urban development policy change in order to alter the perception of the future land-use of the respective areas. In hindsight the interviewees stressed the significance of the strategic form of collective action (cf. strategic networks, Sydow 1992; Ibert and Lelong 2010, 43). The political implementation process had been no fast-selling item. Prior to the strategic implementation networks, other initiatives had claimed a change but failed to permanently set it on the political agenda or to successfully start an implementation process. Thus, several divergent development ideas already existed in the local arena when they were taken up by the network founders and recombined to a new development approach (cf. Schumpeter 1952; Vedres and Stark 2007). This time the network founders mobilized sufficient resources to overcome the hegemony of the network domains, which for their part defended the status quo with the help of their political resources. In both cases, network founders originated from leading positions in the public sector (politics, administration, public companies).

5.2 Strategic Network Development, Core Network and Governance Mechanisms

The network approach prompted me to investigate the structure of the strategic network in greater detail. I identified sub-networks which assumed different tasks in the processes and whose characteristics gradually changed during the process. Significant for the processes was a *core network* that took over a leading function (see figure 1).

At the beginning, the networks taking the initiative in Hamburg and Rotterdam were small and dense keeping their new development idea to themselves. In order to avoid controversial debates and premature disclosure of information, they decoupled their strategic sub-network from the local development network as a whole. The network founders expanded their networks selectively and extremely cautious. They decided to establish their first relations according to formal functions associated with the corresponding resources (political, material or knowledge resources). Co-requisite were informal governance mechanisms like trust (e.g. Uzzi 1997) or reciprocity (e.g. Stegbauer 2010). Resources and governance mechanisms proved more relevant for the formation of new relations than hierarchy in public administration: New participants were often selected by ignoring formal organizational structures. In Hamburg, for example, network actors did not inform superiors in public administration

about the “real” tasks their employees had to fulfil for the improvement of the new development scheme. In Rotterdam, the affiliation to a supposedly progressive urban design paradigm turned out to be a critical factor for a “hand-picked” selection of members for the Kop van Zuid project team.

With regard to the working relations *inside* the networks, the interviewees assessed the extraordinary character of the cooperation as crucial for urban development change. Mostly, mutual trust and relatively symmetrical relations coordinated the action within the networks. Power asymmetries played only a subordinate role (working at eye level). The ties were of average intensity, because most contacts were limited to professional aspects. Network members seldom met privately, e.g. to have dinner together, to join the same sports club or to share other activities outside their professional life (see the concept of multiplexity, Uzzi and Gillespie 2002, 601).

In *Hamburg*, the actors emphasized the relevance of trust (loyalty, respect). According to their statements, the dyads were free of rivalries. In *Rotterdam*, the network governance ran less smoothly. The decoupling of actors out of the network core, ambiguities and rivalries characterized the process as well. For instance, an urban planner (private sector), who had performed a crucial function for the creative elaboration of the urban design concept as well as the presentation strategy, was decoupled at a latter phase of the process. At this time his resources seemed to be less relevant and contentions increased. Instead, actors of the local government⁷ became more important in order to raise material resources from actors on the national level; they took over relevant positions in the network core.

In *Hamburg*, a reciprocity mechanism initiated change: The resource exchange “land for political backing” enabled the network founders to gain the relevant resources to continue proceedings. Harbour functions would leave the inner city port areas to facilitate the development of a mixed-used urban quarter. In exchange for that, the arrangement was bound to the political implementation of a new container terminal at an expansion site on the edge of the city. The seclusion of this arrangement was kept until shortly before the political passage of the project.

The network founders in *Rotterdam*, too, used strategies of decoupling, albeit merely temporal. For example, during the ideation phase (cf. Ibert and Lelong 2010) they decoupled those employees in the urban development department, whose domains they considered to be too influenced by the old planning cultures. During the mobilization phase (cf. Ibert and Lelong 2010) they kept central elements of the new approach exclusive.

In both cases, the actors brought *surprise tactics* into action. In *Hamburg*, they celebrated the sudden publication of the new urban development plan at a

⁷ “College van Burgemeester en Wethouders” (Dutch for the mayor and his deputy mayors).

strategically well-chosen time and in a location of high symbolic order. In Rotterdam, the network actors utilized a variety of surprise tactics in order to mobilize others. First of all, they elaborated a sophisticated presentation of the urban design (multimedia show and large-scale model). Its novelty was performed step-by-step to small “target groups” in order to increase the singularity of the project.

5.3 A New Reality Construction: Developing Persuasive Narratives

The development of a new reality construction mobilized members from opposite network domains as supporters. In *Hamburg*, the formulation of a consistent objective notwithstanding a great amount of different and opposing interests in the political arena was crucial for the success of the network. To reach this shared reality, the actors of the network had to be able to switch between network domains (Mische and White 1998, 699), i.e. to be cognitive-cultural versatile. The actors used the reciprocity mechanism to overcome domain differences. This required a combination of elements from differing domains in a new narrative which had to stabilize the network and, at the same time, mobilize other actors to eventually overcome the opposing network domains. Emblematic of the new shared reality was the slogan “*Der Hafen gibt, der Hafen nimmt*” (“the harbour gives, the harbour takes” [trans. by author]). The harbour “gave” its outdated inner city docklands and “took” a new container terminal at the edge of the city. From a harbour-related perspective, the combination was a precondition for the new development scheme. In *Rotterdam*, the bridging of competing domains was generated by a convincing narrative as well. It demonstrated the potential of the new urban development approach for the city as a whole. The narrative contained several dimensions in order to meet the concerns of the different target audiences. By way of example, for the residents of the neighbouring quarters the narrative included improvements regarding open spaces as well as social and transportation infrastructures like a new tramway line passing through their district (programme “*Wederzijds Profijt*” or “*Social Return*”). A continuous transformation enabled the narrative’s long-lasting persuasiveness. In the consolidation phase of the process (cf. Ibert and Lelong 2010) the narrative was inserted in a conceptional frame on a higher level. The political programme of “*Vernieuwing van Rotterdam*” (Renewal of Rotterdam [trans. by author], College van B en W Rotterdam 1987) had been developed by the local government as a vision for the future development of Rotterdam as a whole. In 1987, the new urban design *Kop van Zuid* served as a central urban design project in the political programme which also comprised economic and social components. The integration into a broad strategy encouraged further decision-making and financial assurances on a federal level and from the city council of Rotterdam.

5.4 Network Positions and Social-Psychological Orientations

The combination of social-structural and social-psychological features led me to a number of network-theoretical concepts dealing with network positions which open up specific options for action – depending on the actors' strategic orientation (cf. Obstfeld 2005, 120; *structuralist constructivism*, Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994, 1431). In the following section I will delineate two concepts that are representative for the impact of these strategic orientations.

Actors with a *tertius iungens strategic orientation* (Obstfeld 2005) took over stabilizing functions inside the networks in Rotterdam and Hamburg. Especially in Rotterdam this strategic orientation became relevant due to emerging rivalries in the network core. For example, the alderman for spatial development used his neutral position between two competing network members to act as a *social broker*⁸ (Diani 2003) and ended a blockade. Furthermore, he built up several relationships with actors on a national level in order to generate more financial support (national subsidies). Another relevant position was formed by actors in overlapping network domains. In this *intercohesive position* (Vedres and Stark 2007), actors with a *promotion focus* (Levine et al. 2000, 88; Higgins 1998) were able to recombine elements of the competing domains in order to develop the new reality construction for the urban development change. In Hamburg, the CEO of the public logistics company recombined long-lasting interests of his company (harbour expansion by means of a new container terminal) with the likewise decades-long interests of urban planners (development of a new urban quarter in lieu of the outdated inner city docklands). He was aware of the extraordinary reactions the single measures would cause in the different local network domains involved in spatial development. It can be assumed that he selected this risky strategy because of his *promotion focus* – he perceived mainly the positive outcome of his recombining proposal.

6. Methodological Discussion and Implications for Further Research

This paper set out to develop a multilevel analysis to shed light on the complexities and dimensions of urban politics. The framework conceptualized the constraining and enabling conditions towards change that depart from established political perceptions and interpretations, routines and actual balances of power. My multilevel analysis was based on the theoretical approach by Emirbayer and Goodwin (1996), which disaggregated structuring conditions into three different

⁸ An actor who has the capability "to connect actors who are not communicating because of some specific political or social barrier, rather than the mere absence of practical opportunities" (Diani 2003, 107).

contexts of action. I translated the theoretical approach into a network theoretical methodology. At first, the social-structural analysis guided the reconstruction of the networks and provided the basis for all other analyses. In doing so, I developed a set of criteria which sharpened the definition and demarcation of the actor configuration. Additionally, the network theoretical features and concepts provided a distinct framework supporting the comparison of the cases.

In the following chapter, I will discuss methodological challenges and the descriptive and explicative capabilities of the method according the various conditions on collective social action towards change in urban development politics.

6.1 Balancing the Parts and the Whole: The Tension Between Complexity and Depth

The integrated analysis of actor configurations, cultural frames and social psychological conditions allowed for an encompassing analysis and helped “to broaden the range of causal mechanisms” (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 358). I was able to discern a variety of constraining and enabling conditions on human agency in urban politics by investigating the autonomous and yet intersecting and overlapping contexts (cf. Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 358). The network approach underpinned such a complexity, without however falling into eclecticism (cf. Sydow 1992, 9; Flick 2005a, 311). Certainly, the integrated study comprised a challenging programme. The investigation of several analytical levels lessened the possibility of studying the individual ones in greater depth. For instance, regarding the network theoretical aspects, the framework offers several links for the elaboration of themes which constitute a certain provisional status in this work. Nevertheless, the framework attempts to balance out the influence of the different structuring contexts and to grasp the multiple interdependencies between these levels.

In this paper, however, the social-psychological context of action remains quite sketchy. By discussing solely the notion of *orientations* (cf. Frese and Fay 2001; Obstfeld 2005) it comprises just a narrow segment of possible theoretical concepts. Therefore, the more profound input of social-psychological concepts shall require some further research. At the same time, the reconstruction of the networks with micro-analytical profundity entailed extensive in-depth interviews to collect the respective data (e.g. *governance mechanisms*, *orientations*). To reduce expenses in the case of Rotterdam, I decided to forgo the interviews with actors on the national level, which led to a certain simplification of the multilevel influences on urban politics. Therefore, the study at hand has a distinct meso- and microanalytical focus, although the framework is conceptionally capable of including all geographical levels. Basically, the approach leaves open the setting of priorities in order to provide a broad framework to prevent that “such analyses will risk mistaking the proverbial forest for (at best) a few trees” (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1996, 374).

6.2 The Problem of Subjectivity and Retrospectivity

By reconstructing historical political processes, the problem of retrospectivity and subjectivity is likely to emerge. In my case, I portrayed the network relations and developments from the perspective of those actors who regarded each other as relevant and being a part of the strategic network for change. Certainly, this is just one perspective on the process as I excluded the perception of concerned parties outside the strategic network. For me, the main points of the study were the actors' tactics and their "intra-network" mechanisms to pursue the implementation of a political scheme. The focus on the strategic network enabled a greater depth of the analysis than, for example an analysis of the urban development network as a whole. Nevertheless, the social-structural and cultural contexts I analysed included the conditions which influenced the actors' decisions: Their "strategic context analysis" (Jessop 2005, 48) encompassed features of the whole local development network in as much as they adjusted their strategy to resources and cultural domains of anticipated opponents.

I approximated the inner workings of the strategic network by taking account of the actors' different perceptions (cf. Flick 2005b, 151). The analysis was not aimed at identifying an objective or universal "truth". The constructivist elements of the levels "strategic network positions" and "network domains" are to emphasize this aspect. By evaluating the qualitative interviews, the interviewees' subjectivity had to be given special attention (cf. Manger 2006, 230; Baumgarten and Lahusen 2006, 190). Among other things, their reports were shaped by their respective positions in the network. Network members in central positions often imparted more substantial and detailed knowledge than actors on the periphery. To reach an encompassing impression for the interpretation of the data, I incorporated as many perspectives as possible (cf. Hollstein 2011). For example, I chose interviewees from different sectors and levels of hierarchy. Accordingly, some findings were inconsistent with one another and forced me to conduct a more profound investigation, which led to further insights (cf. Hollstein 2010, 467). The corresponding representation of various perspectives prevented a systematic bias.

Additionally, the retrospectivity of the research challenged my reconstruction of the historical processes. Actors involved in "successful" processes tend to neglect contentious situations, ambivalence or rivalries between network members (cf. Manger 2006, 229). In order to avoid an all too adjusted process description, it is useful to consider the different perspectives or to entertain alternative process trajectories (cf. Manger 2006, 229). On the contrary, a great temporal distance to the historical events is likely to support the refraction of narratives that seem extremely smoothed. Sometimes, contemporary contextual conditions reveal the idiosyncrasies of the historical processes. A process which is mostly situated in a bygone era increases the accessibility of interviewees and the openness of their statements. Moreover, the comparison of two

case studies acted as a form of data-triangulation and prevented me from jumping to hasty conclusions. By investigating a single case study, the researcher misses the possibility of questioning the extraordinary character of his findings: For example, the exclusive process in Hamburg seems to be a less common process in urban politics. Generally speaking, keeping a new development approach of such dimensions a secret over a number of years is less likely to be successful. In Hamburg, this was possible due to the advantageous positions of core network members in the local urban development network, and their high political and material resources.

7. Implications for Further Research in Urban Politics and Planning

The analytical framework proposed here illustrated how urban development changes can be analysed and explained. The combination of different network theoretical approaches allowed me to analyse the process from different points of view in order to approximate complexity. I consider the abstraction of the network approach as particularly advantageous in order to explain urban development change, since this abstraction facilitates an open research process unburdened of assumptions concerning actor constellations, coordination mechanisms and perceptions that are involved in urban development politics.

To enhance the understanding of the multiple mechanisms of different strategic alliances in urban politics, it seems particularly interesting to investigate the capabilities of social movements (e.g. Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988; Diani 2003) or other actors from civil society by using the framework presented here. How do these actors employ the variety of their resources? Do they – compared with actors from (local) politics and administration – utilize place-based narratives and symbols in order to compensate for low material resources in a different way? And can we actually state increasing capabilities of actors from civil society to shape the city according to their specific interests? Further research may explicitly address this aspect to reach beyond the state-centered perspective of this study. The investigation of empirical cases with a more heterogeneous actor configuration most likely creates additional insights into the applicability of the network theoretical framework presented here.

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